

# **KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

## **STAFF NOTE**

### **Review Item:**

Dropout Prevention and Persistence to Graduation

### **Applicable Statute or Regulation:**

KRS 158.145, KRS 158.146, 704 KAR 3:305

### **History/Background:**

At the June 2006 meeting, the Kentucky Board of Education reviewed release of the 2005 nonacademic data. At that time, the Board asked the Department to bring information to the December meeting to discuss the dropout rate among African Americans, Hispanics, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency and the homeless. The Department proposes that the Board consider the dropout problem over the course of multiple meetings. This is a complex issue, which is directly related to a broader context of the changes that are needed in Kentucky to bring every student to graduation and successful transition to college and work. The December meeting will focus on the extent and nature of the problem and updating the Board on state-level dropout prevention efforts to date. The discussion in February will focus on a more in-depth examination of strategies at the local levels and potential state-level actions for the Board. At this meeting, selected districts will present information about successful strategies and discuss how they are approaching schools where dropout problems persist.

Because the information being presented is extensive, a Briefing Paper and Appendices accompany the staff note. The staff note provides highlights and clarifies the key issues. The Briefing Paper expands the discussion on each point and presents supporting data.

The December discussion will focus on three perspectives:

- How extreme is the problem in Kentucky and what does it look like nationally?
- What has been and is being done from the state level to reduce the dropout rate?
- What strategies will be employed in the future?

### ***How Extreme is the Problem in Kentucky and What Does it Look Like Nationally?***

#### **Dropout Rate in Kentucky– Grades 9 through 12<sup>i</sup>**

- The male dropout rate continues to be greater than the female dropout rate.
- The African American and Hispanic dropout rates continue to be greater than the White dropout rate.
- The African American dropout rate increased from 4.56 in 2004 to 5.92 in 2005.
- The Hispanic dropout rate increased from 4.77 in 2004 to 5.24 in 2005.

- Of the 99 districts for which African American dropout data is reported, in 31 the African American dropout rate is higher than among White students. In 68 districts, the African American dropout rate is less than the dropout rate among their White counterparts.

#### Dropout Rate and Persistence to Graduation Nationally

Dropout rate and graduation rate are closely connected. Kentucky does not report graduation rate at the state level for subpopulations. However, based on the United States Department of Education Common Core of Data, Kentucky's graduation rates (2002 – 03 data) were as follows, in comparison to national data.

Graduation Rates	All Students	Male	Female	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
Kentucky	69.7	65	73.5	--	79.5	63.7	54.1	70.7
All States	69.6	65.2	72.7	47.4	77	55.6	51.6	76.2

#### Socioeconomics and Ethnicity as Factors

According to national research, “Schools that have a majority of minority students and serve high-poverty areas are five times more likely than other schools to have what Johns Hopkins University researchers describe as weak “promoting power.” Schools with weak promoting power promote 50 percent or fewer of their freshmen to senior status within four years .<sup>ii</sup> Poverty, alone, is identified as a significant risk factor in studies of the dropout problem nationwide.

#### ***What Has Been And Is Being Done To Reduce The Dropout Rate?***

Several structures have been put into place at the state-level over time that are specifically targeted at preventing dropouts, such as the 2000 Comprehensive Dropout Prevention Strategy, the Minority Student Achievement Gap Task Force, and the State Dropout Prevention Grant Program. Other initiatives provide resources at the local level that can be used to prevent dropouts at the discretion of the local district, such as Extended School Services, Secondary GED, Alternative Education Programs, and Family Resource/Youth Services Centers. Overall, none of these initiatives alone has had substantial impact on reducing the dropout rate statewide. As part of a systemic approach inside a local district, any and all can play a part in highly effective programs.

#### ***What Strategies Will Be Employed?***

The **Secondary Agenda** that the Board has adopted places students at the center of a system of supports as evidenced by the five essential principles, which must be present and sustained for every student in every school. The extent to which and the manner in which each of these is implemented will impact the dropout rate:

- Students are actively engaged in a challenging curriculum that stretches his/her learning and is based on the Individual Learning Plan.
- Educators collaborate in professional learning communities that increase capacity to provide high-quality, engaging learning experiences for every student.

- Curriculum, instruction and assessment are comprehensive, standards-based and include both traditional and non-traditional opportunities.
- Schools create a culture of excellence and provide individualized supports so that every student experiences success.
- Leadership organizes and reorganizes resources in response to student needs on a continuing basis.

Effective implementation of the **Individual Learning Plan (ILP)** can mitigate many of the factors that are placing students at risk and provide equitable access to high-quality advising, which is crucial. The ILP, itself, contains administrative query and reporting capability that will help administrators monitor the advising processes for the most at risk students. New data reporting capabilities will enable the creation of “On Track Indicators” within the ILP, which could also function as an *early warning system* to signal that a student is at risk.

According to the Education Trust, there is **no single strategy** that will create great gains in narrowing the achievement gap and keeping our most at risk students in school and on a path to success. The Education Trust says:

*“While there is no single “silver bullet” strategy employed by all successful schools, several common themes emerge from the practices of the schools receiving the 2006 Dispelling the Myth awards. Among them: having high expectations for all students; analyzing student data to track progress; identifying individual student needs and improving instruction; providing a rich curriculum that is aligned to state standards; and using purposeful professional development to improve teachers’ skills.”*

### **Policy Issues:**

- Should the discussion on dropout prevention be positioned in the context of the overall agenda for increasing graduation rates for all students?
- Should the Board examine the role of multiple entities in confronting this problem through policy as well as strategy? (i.e., KBE, local boards, schools, parents and community)

### **Impact on Getting to Proficiency:**

The dropout rate of students of poverty and minority students is unacceptable and must change. Fortunately, there is a foundational principle on which schools can rely in making this happen while also increasing the achievement of these students.

This foundational principle is **equity**. Equity means providing each and every student with the individualized support he or she needs to reach or exceed a common standard and to be successful in school. As schools institutionalize equity, they will decrease dropouts and close their achievement gaps. Equity is implemented through a comprehensive and systemic approach to leadership, school culture, and teaching and learning. KDE will share more about this at the KBE's February meeting where schools will present specific practices.

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**Deputy Commissioner**

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**Interim Commissioner of Education**

**Date:**

December 2006

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<sup>i</sup> Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Assessment and Accountability, Briefing 1993- 2005, nonacademic data

<sup>ii</sup> Balfanz, R. & Legters, N. (2004). *Which high schools produce the nation's dropouts? Where are they located? Who attends them?* Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools.